



## GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

### PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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### SUNDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2019 - FISHERS OF MEN

**EPISTLE:** The Reading is from St Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians [1:21-24, 2:1-4]

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us in God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand. But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad but the one who is made sorrowful by me? And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

#### **EXPLANATION:**

The major theme of today’s Epistle is St Paul’s attempt to be reconciled to the Corinthian Church. Outsiders have shown up in Corinth, calling themselves “super apostles”. They claim to be better than Paul, alleging that he doesn’t measure up; that he is an imposter, indecisive

and cowardly. In defence of his apostleship Paul teaches that the Holy Trinity is at work in every true believer. He does not preach by his own wisdom and knowledge but that apostleship is established **in Christ (1:21)**, through baptism, and **anointed and sealed (1:22) in the Spirit** through Chrismation. The consecrated myrrh used in the Sacrament of Chrismation inscribes the “seal”, the mark of authenticity borne by those who receive it, which brings grace, peace and guidance to those who submit themselves to the will of God. The Holy Spirit acts through both of the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation, evoking confidence and joy in believers, thus providing a **guarantee (1:22)**, a glimpse of that which awaits in the fullness of the Kingdom. Thus the joys of the Kingdom begin in this life, when we come to the realization of the existence and love of God, and grow to the degree that faith and love prevail within us. Thus, being the light of the divinity, grace cannot remain hidden or unnoticed. It acts in the apostles, changing their nature. They became more intimate with Christ. The divine energies become increasingly perceptible, revealing to the righteous the face of the living God, “the kingdom of God present with power” (Matthew 9:1). For Paul, the apostolic ministry is part of the “ministry of the Spirit” and is necessary for the manifestation of the Trinity in the Body of Christ. The apostles therefore have a real authority, a loving, serving authority, based on and empowered by the mercy of God. They have the indwelling presence of the Spirit which Christ gave them when He gave them the power to preach the Gospel to all nations. How then can Paul be called indecisive, weak and cowardly when he speaks with the power of the Holy Spirit? **“I came no more to Corinth” (1:23)** means that Paul delayed his return to Corinth to give the Corinthians time to correct their ways and to allow the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts so that they could live up to what was expected of them. He changed his itinerary to spare them a confrontation. The purpose of Church discipline is never for the leader to exercise dominion or harsh authority; but rather it is to call for repentance, reconciliation with the Church and renewal in the joy of the Spirit. **(1:24)** Paul cannot force their compliance to his guidance. As a teacher of the Gospel, he can only try to make them aware of the wonders of God’s Kingdom and to

awaken their desire to partake of them. Salvation comes through faith in Christ which no one can impose on another. With the gift of free will, each of us responds to that which we learn about God. That response forms a relationship between Him and us. At the Second Coming of Christ, that relationship will be the basis for the manner in which we spend eternity.

**GOSPEL** **The Reading is from St Luke** [5:1-11] So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, *"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."* But Simon answered and said to Him, *"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."* And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"* For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, *"Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."* So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

**EXPLANATION:** Jesus was preaching throughout Galilee and as the multitude got bigger he asked Simon Peter if He could stand in his boat to address the crowd at the shore of **Lake Gennesaret** (also known as the Sea of Galilee – 13 miles long – 7 miles wide). **(5:1-2)** Peter immediately obeyed Jesus and called Him "Master" and after the sermon finished Jesus wanted to repay Peter for his kindness and

rewarded him with a large catch of fish. Peter kneels and confesses Jesus as **“Lord”**, showing profound awareness both of the divinity of Christ and of his own human sinfulness. **(3:3-6)** The first disciples, partners in fishing, were to become partners also in the work of mission and evangelism in the early church – **“fishers of men”**. **(5:7-11)** The reason why Peter did not catch any fish after toiling all night was because he was too close to the shore. Jesus said, **“Put out into the deep”**. These words are symbolic of the way we live. Too many of us skim the surface of life, we hug the shore. If we want to live, we must launch out into the deep, putting our faith in Christ. Truth is not always on the surface. Truth is deep. God is the inexhaustible depth and ground of all being. To reach Him we must let our nets down into deeper waters. We must penetrate the depths of our heart and seek Him in constant prayer. The Christian is one who is called to move out of the shallows of self-trust and into the depths of total relinquishment of his life to Christ as Lord and Master. Then he will float on the sea of faith, protected from wind and tide by the power of Our Lord. And Jesus tells Peter, **“do not be afraid”**. There are different kinds of fear – fear of facing the pressures of life, fear of death, fear of illnesses, fear of condemnation, etc. It robs life of meaning by keeping us worried and focussed on trivial things which often lead to despair. But fear of God is a healthy fear which is given to us for our protection. Jesus also tells us to fear hypocrisy – that is, **“the leaven of the Pharisees”** and the loss of God’s friendship. As Christians we accept fear as part of life, because we know that by accepting Jesus as Our Lord, we are no longer controlled by fear but have the power to overcome. God given faith has the power to destroy fear. As long as we keep our faith centred in God, worry and fear cannot remain. **“When I am afraid I will trust in Thee.”** (Ps 56:3) Attach your fear with prayer. Fear of the most devastating illness can be healed by prayer, which gives rise to courage in the sufferer. Also **“perfect love casts out fear”**. (1John 4:18) The more you love God, the more you trust Him and give yourself and your fears to Him. Commit yourselves and your families in to the hands of God and all your fears will disappear.